KICKSHAWS

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Kickshaws is currently being assembled by a series of guest editors. All contributions should be sent to the editor in Morristown, New Jersey.

Basics

For the duration of this Kickshaws, 8C will be used to refer to the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary (8th edition), NI2 the Merriam-Webster New International (2nd edition), NI3 the Merriam-Webster New International (3rd edition), and NI the combination of NI2 and NI3.

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words?

Some years ago, Dave Silverman, wondering about that, had someone program a computer to find all integral solutions of the alphametic PICTURE/WORD, which contains all ten digits. In the February 1972 Kickshaws, he reported some of the quotients that formed words, but I had to write to him to learn what had been determined about the original question.

It turns out that a PICTURE can be worth anywhere from 112 WORDs (if PICTURE = 1037568 and WORD = 9264) to 9229 (9625847/1043). Never exactly 1000, of course. Other minima and maxima are: for PICTURE, 9875620/1423 and 1037568/9264; for WORD, 9572436/1038 and 4621057/9853.

U. and the Rebus

A picture made of letters is a rebus, like Sylvia Bursztyn's ≤ WY= where there's a will there's a way (where there's a W ill, there's a W, a Y). A rebus is generally worth much less than a thousand words, but see "The One-Letter Rebus" in the May 1976 Word Ways for examples of how much a single letter can do. Here is a rebus quiz based on the names of 13 American universities and institutes; how many of these can you solve? As an aid, the numbers in parentheses indicate the word lengths of the answers, and subers and enigmatics are identified (see my "Word-Rubric, Rebi" in the August issue for definitions of these).

1. V (9 - suber,
   4 enigmatic)
2. T X IAN (5 9 - enigmatic)
3. LP (6 - suber)
4. S NER (10 - suber)

5. T (9 - enigmatic)
Hal

6. ERN (12)

7. M (3)

8. OH (6 - suber)

9. GE/GEWN (10)

10. C/NL (7)

11. HG C (7 - suber)

12. $ N L (8 - enigmatic)

13. BR E (8)

For the Logophile's Library

Less a tour de force than Gadsby or Alphabetical Africa, but still quite worth knowing about, is Lancelot Hogben's Whales for the Welsh: A Tale of War and Peace With Notes For Those Who Teach or Preach (London: Rap & Carroll, 1967). This is probably the longest book ever written in words of one syllable. I saw it once but haven't read it.

I have read The Oxford Book of American Light Verse (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), edited by William Harmon. It'll never replace David McCord's What Cheer in my heart, but it's very good. Several items are of logological interest: a macaronic verse by Oliver Wendell Holmes, a verse by F.P.A. made up of lines from other poems, George Starbuck's "Sonnet with a Different Letter at the End of Every Line", and an F. E. Brooks poem in which the tongue-click usually spelled 'tsk' appears as 'cxh'. The 19th-century poets are my favorites; verse was generally long-winded before then and obscure afterwards. Aside from Ogden Nash and a few other old standbys, the 20th century does have good offering from musical writers, cummings, Rexroth, and a number of double-dactyl writers (notably Starbuck).

Stf Stuff

A few years ago, science-fiction author Gene Wolfe wrote a prize-winning novella entitled 'The Island of Doctor Death and Other Stories'. Since then he has written two other stories entitled 'The Death of Doctor Island' and 'The Doctor of Death Island'. Good, too.

On the other hand, 'The Great Beer Plague', in a 1959 Amazing, was lousy. But it did contain a section in which the protagonist reflects on four unpleasant aspects of his situation with this crescendo: '... Worse ... Worse worse ... Worstest worst ... ' How's that for multiple comparison, Darryl?

Splitting the Alphabet

If all 26 letters of the alphabet are divided into two or more mutually exclusive subsets, we can call a word 'pure' for that partition if all its letters come from one of the subsets. Suppose we form the longest pure word for each subset; we can now ask, of all these longest pure words, what are the longest longest pure word and the shortest longest pure word? For example, in the partition A-M/N-Z the shortest longest pure word (or the 'shorter longest' if you want to be picky) is 'nonsupports' and

the longest longest pure word is 'Hamamelidaceae' (both with respect to NI). For the division by number of Morse dots and dashes (ET/AIMN/DGKORSUW/BCFHJLPQVXYZ) the shortest longest pure words are 'flyby' and 'xylyl', and the longest longest pure word is 'sourwoods'.

Since every letter is also a word, the questions for 'shortest shortest' and 'longest shortest' pure words are trivial.

Restricting ourselves to 13/13 halvings of the alphabet and NI words (no dictionary phrases), it is interesting to ask, which of the 10,400,600 possible halvings has the longest longest longest pure word, and what is it? (Ties are possible, of course.) What is the shortest longest longest pure word? The longest shortest longest? The shortest shortest longest?

The longest longest longest pure word is not hard to find; one merely looks for the longest word in NI with at most 13 different letters. In fact, the halving ACEGHILNOPTRY/BDFGJKMSUVWXZ yields the longest longest longest pure word in NI, the 27-letter 'electroencephalographically'.

The shortest longest longest pure word is harder to find. It must come from a halving in which both halves are as hostile as possible to long pure words. If each half contains at least two vowels, each will probably have rather long longest pure words, so I think it may be wise to put all vowels in one half and fill it out with uncongenial letters. Considering such words as 'epieikeia', 'papiopio', 'kaikawaka', 'kukukuku' and 'quiaquia', I don't think one can do better than AEIJOPQUVWXYZ/BCDFGHKLMNRST, but even this has the longest longest pure word 'equivoque'. Can anyone find a halving to shorten this to an 8-letter word?

For the longest shortest longest pure word, one requires a halving in which both halves are very amenable to long pure words. This may be the hardest of the questions; as a start, I offer ACGHJMOPQRTXY/BDEFIKLNSUVWZ, whose shortest longest pure word is no shorter than the 15-letter 'senselessnesses', since the other half provides 'chromophotography'.

Finally, it's not too hard to find the shortest shortest longest pure word. In the division ETAOINSHRLUWY/BCDFGJKMPQVXZ, the longest NI2 pure word from the second half is 1 letter long. However, NI3 is much quicker to call an acronym a word, so this partition's shortest longest pure NI word is 'PBX' -- probably one of the shortest shortest longest pure words of all partitions. I suspect that no amount of shuffling can produce a second half with a 2-letter longest pure word.

One can go on to 2-way divisions into sets of n/26 - n letters and propound further questions. For example, what are the longest pure words for other reasonable divisions, such as straights vs. curvies (AEFHIKLMNTVWXYZ/BCDGJOPQRSU)? If we ask the above four questions for all 13 different n/26 - n division types, which n provides the shortest shortest longest longest pure word? And what about multiway partitions, particularly the near-aliquot ones like 8/9/9 and 6/6/7/7? Over to you.

Joining the Alphabet

Most logologists know that the longest NI words with letters in alphabetical and reverse-alphabetical order (repetitions allowed) are 'Aegilops' and 'spoon-feed'. But what is the longest word made up of two interwoven alphabetical sequences with their letters in alphabetical order -- in dialphabetical order, we might say? To start the ball rolling, I offer fEMiNiNity. And in reverse-dialphabetical order, sPrInGHEaD. (I hope someone will also investigate boustrophedon words, woven from one alphabetical and one reverse-alphabetical sequence, like abScONdeNCe.)

The same questions can be asked for words in trialphabetical order, and so on. Is there any word that is not in at most ennealphabetical order? Quite likely every word is; at least, the two best-known megalosesquipedalians are. Here is their row-by-row dissection:

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antidisestablishmentarianism

pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis
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The first contains the reverse-alphabetical subsequence TSLIHEA, so no improvement is possible. The latter seems to hold nothing longer than UTRPLICA, so maybe it can be cut to octalphabetical order. I doubt it, though one subsequence is only one letter long (M).

Similarly, each is in at most reverse-octalphabetical order:

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antidisestablishmentarianism

pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis
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These are the best results possible, as ADEIMNRS and ACILNOS are alphabetical-order subsequences.

Part of the Alphabet

At the last National Puzzlers' League convention, Gary Pisher provided a very enjoyable contest called 'Consonyms'. A consonym of a word has the same consonants in the same order, ignoring all vowels. /y/ and /w/ are always consonants, wherever they appear in the transcription.

For example, consonyms of 'exam' in 8C (with consonant pattern /gzm/) are 'eczema' and 'gizmo', but not, unfortunately, 'exhume' (with pattern /gzym/) or 'egoism' (with /gwzm/). Likewise Eocene, assign, snow, usnea, and one pronunciation of 'sinew' are consonyms. But no nonsense with digraphs; 'thought' and 'outhit' may both look like they have the pattern /tht/, but they're not consonyms; /th t/ ≠ /t h t/.

See how close you can come to a perfect score on these items from his quiz, using 8C transcriptions: film (13 words besides 'film' itself), lance (8 words), quays (5 words). See Answers and Solutions for his list, 8C if you think you've outdone him, and the November/December 1979 Games Magazine if you'd like some more.

Spelling the Alphabet

The editor writes that the only letters 'spelled out' in NI2 are consonants: bee (below the line), cee, dee, ef, gee, aitch, jay, kay, el, em, emma, en, pee, cue, ar (below the line), ess, tee, vee, double-U, ex, wye, zed, zee. NI3 adds be, ce, de, eff, ge, ell, es, te, ve, double-you, and wy, but not ze, oddly enough. Also two whole phonetic alphabets, the old Able Baker Charlie and the current Alfa Bravo Charlie, plus (implicitly) Ack and Pip from a third alphabet, if you look under 'Emma'.

Using up the Alphabet

Clement Wood, author of the most popular rhyming dictionary, is 91 and still active. Recently he turned to pangrams and produced these:

Mr. Jock, TV quiz Ph.D., bags few lynx
Few mock quartz glyphs' BVD jinx
TV quiz drag nymphs blew Cox, JFK

He claims that all are 'in plain English (all words unitalicized in my 1968 Random House College Edition)'.

Willard Espy, who relayed these results, comments, '... the first of these pangrams is the only one I have ever seen that is absolutely clear without the use of any specialized vocabulary at all; the second requires only familiarity with one reasonably well known word, glyph; and the third is both topical and hilarious'.

Well, true, but it still seems sneaky. They're undeniably immense improvements over the unpleasant old 'J.Q. Schwartz flung D.V. Pike my box' with four pure fill-in letters. NI3 labels everything in the first pangram 'n' or 'n or abbr', so one can't even quibble about words vs. abbreviations. (B.V.D. is just 'trademark', though earlier versions of NI3 listed 'BVDs' as 'n pl' meaning 'underwear', and of course 'Cox' and JFK' are not NI3.)

On the other hand, the straight pangram with its cwms and waqfs offers few new possibilities, so maximum comprehensibility and naturalness is probably the goal of the future. My favorite in this line appeared many

years ago in one of Martin Gardner's books, a Roman officer's report of friendly natives in Norway: 'XV quick nymphs beg fjord waltz'.

If you don't care for comprehensibility, you can always try for a grammatical pangram with no standard words at all. Heard about the two television stars who worked at a barbecue for G-Men trainees on campus? WKRP DJ, TV MC glaze SUNY FBI HQ ox.

I Wonder How Mr. Jock Would Do on This One

New TV shows come and go so fast lately that network executives clearly need a better source of new ideas. Harry Hazard suggests that they should stop doing spinoffs by topic and character and do them by title instead, with the deletion, addition, or change of one letter. For example, a series about a child of unmarried parents -- no, not 'The Bastard', but 'Love Brat'. And given the current Dracula revival, perhaps it's time for 'Love Bat'? Or maybe shows about ...

1. A very friendly Chicano neighborhood?
2. A successful French art dealer?
3. Homosexuals without hang-ups?
4. Life on a fat farm?
5. How to cook frozen foods?
6. A boy and his pony?
7. A Jewish nutritional research project?
8. A revolt against group sex?
9. Psychology for men?
10. The shortest TV show ever made?

Believe It or Not

I know words can change drastically over time, but look at NI3's etymology for 'rose': '...fr. Gk rhodon, prob. of Iranian origin; akin to the source of Per gul rose; akin to OE word, a bush'. What could become both gul and rhodon?

I know the French have a cooler attitude toward flatulence than ours (the term for batter fritters translates as 'nun's fart', for example), but look at NI3's etymology for 'vespetro', a flavored brandy liqueur: 'F. vespétro, fr. vesser to break wind noiselessly + péter to break wind + roter to belch'.

If that can sell, I suppose I shouldn't be surprised that a card-and-gift shop in Chicago has survived for over four years with the name 'He Who Eats Mud'. One proprietor told me the name was picked out of a hat, but I forgot to ask how it got in. He said another of the names in the hat was 'Mother's Hemorrhoids'; if true, I bet they'd've put it right back if it were picked. Or wouldn't have lasted long enough for me to ask the origin.

Do You Believe in Uqfidns?

One group of problems not covered in the recent series on Word Ways

challenges is that of verifying words. For example, in the February 1968 issue Dmitri Borgmann cited the names Xagus, Xeneas, and Xerolybe from John Walker's Key to the Classical Pronunciation of Greek, Latin, and Scripture Proper Names (Philadelphia, 1808), which are not in any known earlier sources. Do you know where Walker got them? Or the words 'raffivest', 'Kissixerxes', and 'Passevent', cited on page 222 of Borgmann's Language on Vacation? Or 'uqfidn', dismissed with other keypunching errors in the Air Force Normal and Reverse English Word List, but which I believe I found somewhere a decade before seeing that work? Or the nonce word 'interinter', said to be somewhere in the Oxford English Dictionary? Or parts of words: are there any words in NI2 containing the sequences YCTTA or OGYCO?

Or in Coincidences?

Earlier this year I heard on the radio that marathon swimmer 'Diana Naiad' had failed to swim from the Bahamas to Florida. At the time it struck me that 'Naiad' was a remarkably apt name for a swimmer, and it couldn't be coincidental that it was a transposal of the first name. Surely, this was a pseudonym; a very good one, too.

Then she made it and appeared on TV as (alas) Diana Nyad. Well, dammit, I was wrong, but I shouldn't have been! If she had any sense of logological fitness she'd respell her last name.

Free Association Partnership Lawyer Criminal

Associations is a game invented by a high school friend of mine, John Zanath. One player thinks of a chain of associations from one word to another, like the title of this section, then tells the endpoints and number of intermediate steps (no more than three) to the other players. Each must now try to link the endpoints with an equally valid association chain of no greater length. (Reconstruction is not the goal; the original chain has no special status and quite likely will be improved on. For example, the above chain could be shortened to free-imprison-criminal.) The game is also fun if the end words are picked at random (with unpromising words like 'hemiterpene' discarded) so that nobody knows how many links will be needed.

It is impossible to specify exactly what constitutes a valid link, but rules are needed to keep the game from turning completely formless. As an absolute minimum, all links must be natural associations, such as might occur in a word association test, clear to everyone present. If a link requires a footnote ('towel to door because I always hang my towel on the bathroom door'), it is not legitimate. When working back from a goal one must particularly beware the pitfall of wrong-way associations. Picture-window is a natural association; window-picture is not.

Other rules may be added according to taste. I ran an associations contest at the last National Puzzlers' League convention in which I added several restrictions to simplify judging:

- no links based only on sound, like tickle-pickle

- no proper names, like judge-Crater-hole (people's vocabularies and associations probably differ much more for proper names)
- no puns, like iron-maiden-Japan-china (one can set up a separate category for clever-but-illegal chains to give such things their due)
- no links depending only on a slight change of form, like movie-musical-music (movie-star-chamber-music is much better)

Some legal chains under these rules are population-explosion-boom-town (but not population-boom-town, as the first step is not a common association), man-hole-donut-dunk, take-powder-dry-clean, bus-integrate-differentiate-distinguish, and telephone-dial-tone-deaf.

The chains below were constructed according to the above rules; see what you can do restricting yourself similarly. I tried them out on two friends, and only two of the resulting 42 chains were the same; so what you'll find in Answers and Solutions are not 'correct' answers, but benchmarks. I used 30 intermediate steps -- three in 6 and 13, two in all of the rest.

1. willing/cake
2. eraser/denture
3. house/wild
4. nose/police
5. face/pad
6. checkers/thumb
7. picket/chain
8. hug/time
9. school/wonder
10. skunk/money
11. side/red
12. acid/top
13. sea/prize
14. flat/dress

Transforming the Form

Here's an idea I've never seen in print, though it's occurred to the editor too. A form, such as a word square, is simply a smallish crossword puzzle, free of black squares or bars, of regular geometric shape. Suppose we relax the definition and say that each row and column must be, not necessarily a word, but any transposal of a word; this is a transposal form. For example, at the right is a transposal rectangle; the words cab, fed, ghi, Lon, glad, behn, and coif are all in NI.

A	B	C
D	E	F
G	H	I
L	N	O

Many questions about forms remain interesting when transferred to transposal forms. For example, is it possible to build a transposal form using all 26 letters of the alphabet with only NI words? Almost certainly, but what is the smallest such form? I'd guess a 4x8 rectangle or an 11-pyramid.

A	B	D	E
E	A	B	D
D	E	A	B
B	D	E	A

What is the largest NI transposal square? The four-square at above right, using eight transposals of 'bade', shows a trivial method for getting huge squares all of one word. We must add the condition that all across letter-sets be distinct, and likewise all downs. In a double transposal form, we add the condition that no across set may match a down set.

A	C	A	R	O	L	I	N	E	N
E	H	C	A	L	O	R	I	M	N
N	E	O	C	A	R	O	D	L	I
I	N	E	P	C	A	G	L	O	R
L	I	N	E	F	T	C	A	R	O
O	R	I	N	S	D	E	C	A	L
R	O	L	S	I	N	U	E	C	A
A	L	T	O	R	E	N	Y	I	C
C	T	O	L	N	I	A	R	E	E
T	A	R	I	E	C	L	O	N	U

The ten-square at the bottom of the preceding page is the largest non-trivial double transposal square constructed to date. The editor found 20 double transadditions of CAROLINE to do the job:

Horizontal: olecranian, chloramine, olecranoid, pelargonic, francolite, coislander, isonuclear, lectionary, carmeloite, ulceration
Vertical: laceration, chlorinate, corelation, psiloceran, forensical, centroidal, neurogliac, corydaline, ceremonial, unicorneal

By analogy, transposal squares in which the horizontal words are repeated in the vertical can be constructed by finding single transadditions of a basic set of letters -- a somewhat easier task. I suspect that transposal ten-squares are commoner than regular seven-squares, but far harder to find. Computer, anyone?

Old Business

My last two Kickshawses presented new self-referential words. This time, a self-referential sentence -- I think: Need I point out that this is a rhetorical question?

Another etymological stutter like 'ouija': the surname of Sir Herbert Beerbohm-Tree. Another paradox: NI3 says a biotic is an antibiotic.

I thought the Tokamak fusion reactor was named after a Russian place, and that it was the longest English word (now usually uncapitalized: tokamak) with the same form as a Russian word (all letters in TOKAMAK are the same in Cyrillic and Roman). Unfortunately, that honor probably reverts to the much shorter MAMA et al. 'Tokamak' turns out to be a stump-compound from toroidskaya kamera magneticheskaya (toroidal magnetic chamber), i.e. TOKAMAГ. Russian /g/ (Г) is pronounced /k/ when word-final, hence the English version. I hope someone can prove me wrong.

New Business

NI3 calls the '!' an 'exclamation point', 'exclamation mark', 'mark of exclamation', or 'mark of admiration', all rather clumsy. I use 'bang' instead -- much more character. It's not in NI3, but appears in the etymology of 'interrobang' (?) in the Addenda. The topic came up in a round-robin letter and other members offered 'flash', 'screamer', 'shout' and 'sparkle' as what they used. Berry and Van den Bark's American Dictionary of Slang contains five: astonisher, christer, scream, screamer, shriek. Of all these, 'screamer' and 'shout' also appear in NI3; I wonder if any others are hidden? What do you use?

Two of my favorite book titles are Cool Sleeps Balaban and Ladies of the Rachmaninoff Eyes. The contents don't look interesting, but I'm sometimes tempted to bore myself because the titles are so beautiful.

Who needs 'bookkeeper'? In A Dictionary of English Weights and Measures (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), by Ronald

E. Zupko, one spelling given for the word 'foot' is 'ffoott'.

The editor writes: "I recall an advertising sign in Washington, D. C. many years ago which consisted of the restaurant name EWARTS. Its neon letters were cycled on and off in such a way that the message EAT AT EWARTS was blinked at the observer. Can readers devise other short sequences of letters which can be used to spell out a message?" At least one effort has been made along these lines, a quite coherent poem made of subsequences of THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE, appearing in "The Poet's Corner" in the November 1974 Word Ways.

Acromythia

An acro-equation is a definition of a group (such as the days of the week or denominations of U.S. coins) in which all full words are replaced by their first letters. For example, given A + A + C + H + P + F + T = 7AT, you would be asked to find the answer Adrastus + Amphicaraus + Capaneus + Hippomedon + Polynices + Parthenopaeus + Tydeus = the Seven Against Thebes.

(By the way, if an epigone is a lesser successor, what is a spelunker?)

I was so taken by the acro-equations presented by the Hazards in last November's Kickshaws that I decided to do a thematic set for this one. All the following acro-equations are taken from classical mythology. Score 2 for each element (including the right-hand side) that you can figure out in numbers 1-3, 5 points per element in the rest. 221 is maximum, 40 is par.

1. NL + LH + EB + CH + SB + G of H + AS + CB + M of D + C of G + GA of the H + C = L of H
2. C + L + A = M (or F)
3. C + C + E + E + M + P + T + T + U = M
4. C + P = D
5. B + Z + E + N = W
6. A + E + T = G
7. A + M + T = E
8. D + E + E = H
9. N + D + M = P (or F)
10. A + C + E + M + M + S + T = P

Linguistic Dialogue

'Is it a Mixtec to study Mexican Indian languages?'

'No, Zoque.'